|  |
| --- |
| Near Sleepy Hollow is a village called Tarry Town. |
| It was settled many years ago by people from Holland. |
| The village had a small school. |
| And one teacher, named Ichabod Crane. |
| Ichabod Crane was a good name for him, because he looked like a tall bird, a crane. |
| He was tall and thin like a crane. |
| His shoulders were small, joined two long arms. |
| His head was small, too, and flat on top. |
| He had big ears, large glassy green eyes and a long nose. |
| Ichabod did not make much money as a teacher. |
| And although he was tall and thin, he ate like a fat man. |
| To help him pay for his food he earned extra money teaching young people to sing. |
| Every Sunday after church Ichabod taught singing. |
| Among the ladies Ichabod taught was one Katrina Van Tassel. |
| She was the only daughter of a rich Dutch farmer. |
| She was a girl in bloom…much like a round red, rosy apple. |
| Ichabod had a soft and foolish heart for the ladies, and soon found himself interested in Miss Van Tassel. |
| Ichabods eyes opened wide when he saw the riches of Katrinas farm: the miles of apple trees and wheat fields, and hundreds of fat farm animals. |
| He saw himself as master of the Van Tassel farm with Katrina as his wife. |
| But there were many problems blocking the road to Katrinas heart. |
| One was a strong young man named Brom Van Brunt. |
| Brom was a hero to all the young ladies. |
| His shoulders were big. |
| His back was wide. |
| And his hair was short and curly. |
| He always won the horse races in Tarry Town and earned many prizes. |
| Brom was never seen without a horse. |
| Sometimes late at night Brom and his friends would rush through town shouting loudly from the backs of their horses. |
| Tired old ladies would awaken from their sleep and say: "Why, there goes Brom Van Brunt leading his wild group again!" |
| Such was the enemy Ichabod had to defeat for Katrinas heart. |
| Stronger and wiser men would not have tried. |
| But Ichabod had a plan. |
| He could not fight his enemy in the open. |
| So he did it silently and secretly. |
| He made many visits to Katrinas farm and made her think he was helping her to sing better. |
| Time passed, and the town people thought Ichabod was winning. |
| Broms horse was never seen at Katrinas house on Sunday nights anymore. |
| One day in autumn Ichabod was asked to come to a big party at the Van Tassel home. |
| He dressed in his best clothes. |
| A farmer loaned him an old horse for the long trip to the party. |
| The house was filled with farmers and their wives, red-faced daughters and clean, washed sons. |
| The tables were filled with different things to eat. |
| Wine filled many glasses. |
| Brom Van Brunt rode to the party on his fastest horse called Daredevil. |
| All the young ladies smiled happily when they saw him. |
| Soon music filled the rooms and everyone began to dance and sing. |
| Ichabod was happy dancing with Katrina as Brom looked at them with a jealous heart. |
| The night passed. |
| The music stopped, and the young people sat together to tell stories about the revolutionary war. |
| Soon stories about Sleepy Hollow were told. |
| The most feared story was about the rider looking for his lost head. |
| One farmer told how he raced the headless man on a horse. |
| The farmer ran his horse faster and faster. |
| The horseman followed over bush and stone until they came to the end of the valley. |
| There the headless horseman suddenly stopped. |
| Gone were his clothes and his skin. |
| All that was left was a man with white bones shining in the moonlight. |
| The stories ended and time came to leave the party. |
| Ichabod seemed very happy until he said goodnight to Katrina. |
| Was she ending their romance? |
| He left feeling very sad. |
| Had Katrina been seeing Ichabod just to make Brom Van Brunt jealous so he would marry her? |
| Well, Ichabod began his long ride home on the hills that surround Tarry Town. |
| He had never felt so lonely in his life. |
| He began to whistle as he came close to the tree where a man had been killed years ago by rebels. |
| He thought he saw something white move in the tree. |
| But no, it was only the moonlight shining and moving on the tree. |
| Then he heard a noise. |
| His body shook. |
| He kicked his horse faster. |
| The old horse tried to run, but almost fell in the river, instead. |
| Ichabod hit the horse again. |
| The horse ran fast and then suddenly stopped, almost throwing Ichabod forward to the ground. |
| There, in the dark woods on the side of the river where the bushes grow low, stood an ugly thing. |
| Big and black. |
| It did not move, but seemed ready to jump like a giant monster. |
| Ichabods hair stood straight up. |
| It was too late to run, and in his fear, he did the only thing he could. |
| His shaking voice broke the silent valley. |
| Who are you? |
| The thing did not answer. |
| Ichabod asked again. |
| Still no answer. |
| Ichabods old horse began to move forward. |
| The black thing began to move along the side of Ichabods horse in the dark. |
| Ichabod made his horse run faster. |
| The black thing moved with them. |
| Side by side they moved, slowly at first. |
| And not a word was said. |
| Ichabod felt his heart sink. |
| Up a hill they moved above the shadow of the trees. |
| For a moment the moon shown down and to Ichabods horror he saw it was a horse. |
| And it had a rider. |
| But the riders head was not on his body. |
| It was in front of the rider, resting on the horse. |
| Ichabod kicked and hit his old horse with all his power. |
| Away they rushed through bushes and trees across the valley of Sleepy Hollow. |
| Up ahead was the old church bridge where the headless horseman stops and returns to his burial place. |
| If only I can get there first, I am safe, thought Ichabod. |
| He kicked his horse again. |
| The horse jumped on to the bridge and raced over it like the sound of thunder. |
| Ichabod looked back to see if the headless man had stopped. |
| He saw the man pick up his head and throw it with a powerful force. |
| The head hit Ichabod in the face and knocked him off his horse to the dirt below. |
| They found Ichabods horse the next day peacefully eating grass. |
| They could not find Ichabod. |
| They walked all across the valley. |
| They saw the foot marks of Ichabods horse as it had raced through the valley. |
| They even found Ichabods old hat in the dust near the bridge. |
| But they did not find Ichabod. |
| The only other thing they found was lying near Ichabods hat. |
| It was the broken pieces of a round orange pumpkin. |
| The town people talked about Ichabod for many weeks. |
| They remembered the frightening stories of the valley. |
| And finally they came to believe that the headless horseman had carried Ichabod away. |
| Much later an old farmer returned from a visit to New York City. |
| He said he was sure he saw Ichabod there. |
| He thought Ichabod silently left Sleepy Hollow because he had lost Katrina. |
| As for Katrina, her mother and father gave her a big wedding when she married Brom Van Brunt. |
| Many people who went to the wedding saw that Brom smiled whenever Ichabods name was spoken. |
| And they wondered why he laughed out loud when anyone talked about the broken orange pumpkin found lying near Ichabods old dusty hat. |